

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Under Secretary Christos Xanthopoulos-Palamas, Under Secretary
Greek Foreign Ministry
Basil Vitsaxas, Ambassador of Greece
Michael Cottakis, Chef du Cabinet
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

Date and Place: October 13, 1970 in Dr. Kissinger's Office

State Dept. review completed

Under Secretary Palamas opened the conversation by saying he brought a message of friendship from Greece--from the government and from the people. Lately, he felt, there had been some rather hopeful developments. Always there has been friendship in Greece for the United States, although there have been some rough spots in our relationship. However, the re-establishment of full military shipments and the visit of Secretary Laird had been important demonstrations of U. S. interest in the area. There are really two important sides of the problem in that area--the NATO element in Europe and in the Eastern Mediterranean and then the problems beyond in the Middle East. The Greek government considers it an asset that U. S. policy shows strength in both parts of this area. Greece feels that this will help improve the political climate in the Balkans. It is not possible to separate the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. The Greek people--owing to the trip of the President to the Mediterranean--know that the Americans have decided to play a strong role in this area and are pleased that the USSR will have to take that into account.

Dr. Kissinger said he felt the Under Secretary's statement of the situation was generally correct as was his characterization of the purpose of the President's trip.

Under Secretary Palamas said there were two points on which he wished to know Dr. Kissinger's views. The first was how he viewed NATO as a factor in the Mediterranean.

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Dr. Kissinger said he wished to say at the outset that the U. S. greatly appreciated the cooperation of Greece in the recent period. The sense that we could count on Greek cooperation helped us in the formulation of our own policy. Going on, he felt that it is difficult to distinguish NATO Europe and

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the Middle East. The U.S. remains committed to NATO. We will - as was said at Naples - not unilaterally reduce our commitment without consulting with our allies. With the increase in strategic weapons, the forces available to NATO should be strengthened rather than reduced.

Under Secretary Palamas asked whether Dr. Kissinger expected the same view from the allies. He said that Greece's troubles in NATO seemed to be starting to subside, even with the Scandinavians. This is one more aspect among recent developments which is favorable. The key question in Greek minds is whether in a crisis the NATO Council would be a good vehicle for decision.

Dr. Kissinger asked whether the Under Secretary had an alternative organization in mind.

The Under Secretary said that he did not. Greece always felt the alternative would be what the U.S. could do by itself.

Dr. Kissinger said that personally he found it hard to imagine that if Greece was attacked we would let assistance be vetoed by Denmark, for instance.

Under Secretary Palamas replied that Greece trusts the U.S..

Dr. Kissinger said it was incredible to him that the U.S. would stand idly by while Greece was being attacked.

Under Secretary Palamas said that at the same time Greece is trying to smooth its relationship with its neighbors. He then asked how Dr. Kissinger viewed the situation in the Middle East.

Dr. Kissinger said it looked as if circumstances favored the extension of the Arab-Israeli cease-fire. The U.S. certainly does. He did not feel that any country would want to be responsible for breaking it, even the UAR.

Under Secretary Palamas said the Greek communities in the Arab world give Greece an unusual position there. There are twenty-five thousand in the UAR. There are technicians in Libya, and the Libyans have asked for technical assistance in maintaining some of their aircraft.

Dr. Kissinger said there are many problems in the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli problem is the most immediate, but there also the problems of the future of the Persian Gulf and of the various radical movements in the area. During the Jordan crisis, one of the purposes of the U.S. was to demonstrate that we could not be pushed out of the area.

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The Under Secretary asked whether Dr. Kissinger felt the Suez Canal would be opened.

Dr. Kissinger replied that he thought it would be if there were a peace settlement. He could not exclude its opening without a peace settlement. There is some chance that Israel might be interested at some point.

The Under Secretary said that Greece is not directly involved in the Middle East problem. It is not possible to find a general solution of the problem but there might be sectors of the problem which are susceptible of solution. He felt that the situation is improved now in Jordan and that it was good that Hussein's hand had been reinforced. When the Undersecretary noted the difficulties caused by the Fedayeen, Dr. Kissinger replied that it is difficult enough to negotiate with governments; it seems all but impossible to negotiate with non-governmental forces such as those.

Under Secretary Palamas noted the possibility of turning the West Bank into a Palestinian state, and Dr. Kissinger replied that there was some fear that the Palestinians would try to destroy Israel if they had their own state.

The Under Secretary said it will be important how the UAR develops. Greece has its own information that there is an increase in anti-Soviet feeling there.

Dr. Kissinger agreed that it is hard to imagine that the Nationalists in the UAR are anxious to trade British imperialism for Soviet imperialism.

The Under Secretary agreed that there had been a natural reaction against the Soviets, "who are everywhere."

Dr. Kissinger asked how the Under Secretary would explain the violations of the standstill agreement in the UAR. Dr. Kissinger said he could not understand why the UAR had not waited until a deadlock had developed in the talks before violating the agreement.

When the Under Secretary asked whether the violations were important, Dr. Kissinger said that they were "massive." There are large numbers of sites that did not exist before the cease-fire came into effect; there are sites that had been started before the cease-fire and had been completed since; there are sites that were completed before the cease-fire but which had had no missiles in them and now did have missiles in them. At first, Dr. Kissinger said he thought that the violations were technical, but as time passed and our knowledge of them became clearer it became impossible to describe them that way. Also, these violations, we think, would have been impossible without the Russians. Moreover, there has been no attempt at concealment.

The Under Secretary asked how Dr. Kissinger evaluated the Soviet move.

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Dr. Kissinger replied that the Soviets must feel that an Israel alive is better than an Israel dead. The Soviets, however, may not know how to apply enough power to push Israel back without killing Israel.

The Under Secretary said that the Soviets, it seemed to him, wanted to avoid war but not to have peace. Greeks are concerned about the increase in pressure on Greece as a result of Mid-Eastern developments. There is the question of the Straits and the need of the Soviets for free communication. He feared that the enhanced Soviet position in the Middle East would bring Greece under increased pressure as the Soviet need to keep open its lines of communication became more pressing. It has always been a Soviet dream to be in the Mediterranean. The fleet was not so dangerous but it was a base for Soviet operations.


Dr. Kissinger replied that the fleet is dangerous to Israel and a nuisance to the U.S.. The U.S. could probably destroy the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean at some price.

The Under Secretary said that the question of the Soviets having a permanent establishment on the ground in the Mid-East is of important concern to Greece.

Dr. Kissinger replied that we are going to be very insistent in any peace settlement to bring to their attention the inappropriateness of such a permanent Soviet establishment.

Changing the subject, Dr. Kissinger said that we sometimes tend to harrass the Greeks about their internal problems, "which I will not do." At the same time, he hoped that the Greeks would remember U.S. problems. The U.S. ability to work with Greece is affected by the internal climate in the U.S., and that in turn is affected by developments in Greece. The Under Secretary said that the U.S. has a friendly government in Greece. Governments change but people remain friendly. There is a real feeling of friendship among the people of Greece.

Dr. Kissinger, concluding the conversation, said that when he was in Greece in 1961 he enjoyed himself very much, and the conversation ended with a series of pleasantries.


Harold H. Saunders

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October 12, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Harold H. Saunders

SUBJECT: Your Talk with Under Secretary Palamas

Background

You may recall that Palamas was Greek Ambassador here when you first came to Washington. You talked with him at least at the time of the NATO ministerial meeting here in Washington in the spring of 1969 along with Foreign Minister Pipinellis. Since the death of Pipinellis this July, he has become the operational head of the Foreign Ministry. Prime Minister Papadopoulos retains the portfolio of Foreign Minister. Palamas is in New York at the head of the Greek delegation to the UN ceremonies. [Bio at Tab A.]

The Greeks are relatively happy in our relationship in the wake of the September 22 resumption of a full military assistance relationship and Secretary Laird's visit to Athens. The trick in our overall relationship, as you know, is to maintain this active alliance and security relationship while still evincing in an unoffensive but serious way the U.S. interest in continued Greek progress to a Parliamentary situation. While Papadopoulos has rightly made clear that this cannot be decisive in Greek thinking, it is worth encouraging the Greeks to help us by doing what they can to keep Greece from becoming an issue in NATO councils and in the U.S. Congress.

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C05080201
pages 5-9Talking Points

1. You are pleased to renew his acquaintance. You saw him with Foreign Minister Pipinellis. You were sorry about Pipinellis' death. [You last saw both in your office together April 11, 1969. Memcon at Tab B.]

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2. You are pleased that it has been possible to restore a normal U.S. -Greek military supply relationship. The President's trip to the Mediterranean was a further dramatization of our view of the importance of the Mediterranean. [You might want to give him some of the flavor of the trip to take home.]

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3. At the same time, it remains a fact of American political life and sensitivities in NATO--right or wrong--that Greece's continued progress toward Parliamentary government is important to our ability to sustain the kind of relationship we have reestablished. This is more a political fact of life than Administration desire.

4. The U.S., while not wishing to become directly involved in the discussions going on in Cyprus, remains concerned that Greece and Turkey maintain close contact so that Cyprus does not become another divisive issue in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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Tab B
Greece

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Panayotis Pipinellis, Foreign Minister
of Greece
Christian X. Palamas, Ambassador of Greece
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Mr. Harold H. Saunders

DATE: Friday, April 11, 1969 in Dr. Kissinger's Office

The conversation opened with a brief exchange of remarks on the President's briefing of the morning's NATO meeting. That led to the Foreign Minister's saying that Greece is fully prepared to accept its obligation in NATO regardless of what help it does or does not get from the others. Dr. Kissinger commended that position.

The Foreign Minister felt that Greece is an important island of stability in the midst of serious change on either side. He said he is deeply concerned about the leftist movements in both Turkey and Italy. He felt that Italy is rapidly approaching the condition of Greece two or three years ago.

Dr. Kissinger asked what the situation in Greece is today. The Foreign Minister spoke of the energy and dedication of the present Government. He noted that, despite criticism from the outside, and despite perhaps a lack of sophistication on the part of the present government, it is made up of men who deeply believe in their mission of reform, eliminating corruption and simplifying administration. They are moving gradually back toward elections but they will take time.

Dr. Kissinger asked under what circumstances the King might return. The Foreign Minister said that is up to the Government. He suggested, however, that the King's return would probably coincide with the ultimate holding of elections.

The Foreign Minister then said that the King had regretted that he had not had a chance to meet with the President. Dr. Kissinger explained the "technical difficulty" since the President had had to limit himself to seeing heads of Government. He assured the Foreign Minister, however, that the President had "the highest personal regard" for the King. He said he himself had called the King to convey this regard

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before the King had departed and he had told the King that if he were to come to the United States on a private visit a meeting on a private basis could be arranged with the President. However, we just could not be in a position of being put in the middle of current political maneuvering in Greece. If the Government of Greece had asked us to receive the King, that would have been an entirely different proposition.

The Foreign Minister picked up this point and said that he felt it is not productive for the U. S. Government to continue to press the present Government for an early return to full constitutional Government. He noted that the Vice President and officials in the State Department had continued to press this point and that the question of continued U. S. military assistance to Greece had become involved in it. He suggested that the U. S. Government should help its NATO partner with military assistance regardless of its political system. Dr. Kissinger said that he could report categorically that the policy of the President is for the United States not to involve itself in the political affairs of other countries. There was one qualification to that -- when the political affairs of Greece became an issue which others in NATO used to weaken the alliance, then we had to take account of that. For the most part, the policy of the President is for the U. S. to concern itself only with the foreign policy of another country.

Dr. Kissinger in an exchange of pleasantries said that when he had visited Greece, he had concluded that perhaps the U. S. and Greece should exchange political leaders. Our leaders are pragmatists and Greece has many practical problems to be solved. The leaders of Greece are men who like to operate in terms of wide vision and the United States could use some of that.

The conversation ended with Dr. Kissinger's reassurance of the President's policy.

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